

# Theatre: Metamorphosis



Rainham School for Girls

Katharine Hurst is a one-woman whirlwind who has created a company – Scene Productions along with her business partner Kelly Taylor Smith that tours schools offering new productions of classic texts. They set up the company seven years ago and is a favourite of Yvonne Letchford, the head of drama at Rainham School for Girls, where I watched in awe, alongside 60 or so students, as she and two actors brought to life a scaled-down version of Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis.

The young people listened and watched intently as Hurst and players Stuart Walker and David Sayers used voice, mime, movement and humour to retell this most bleak of tales about the nature of humanity and man's existence. Using a variety of techniques that showed theatrical theory in practice from Brecht, Berkoff, and Artaud, poor Gregor's transformation into a giant insect was gruesome. His bafflement and terror is superbly contrasted by the reaction of the family – what shall we do for money? As the story unfolds, we are left to question our own humanity – what would we do?

Students of all abilities and stages of their learning benefited from this neat, fast-paced and clever production. For the younger students, the experience of seeing innovative performance is of great value while students of higher level drama appreciated and recognized Hurst's use of techniques, alongside the discussion of themes.

In this age of belt-tightening Hurst wins hands down – offering a niche but valuable service that includes an optional 20 minute question and answer session plus a 30 page (yes 30 page!) teachers pack.

One footnote: I was too revolted to read Kafka as an A Level student many, many moons ago. Seeing Walker portraying a man becoming a giant insect wearing just chinos and top was really quite nausea-inducing – a testament to his skill as an actor!

Well done all.